DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 437 329 SO 031 308

AUTHOR Alaklobi, Fahad
TITLE Promoting Cultural Understanding: The Case of the Saudi Arabian Social Studies Curriculum.
PUB DATE 1999-03-00
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (San Francisco, CA, March 6-8, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Content Analysis; *Cultural Awareness; *Curriculum Evaluation; Curriculum Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Global Approach; Social Studies; *Textbook Content; Textbook Research
IDENTIFIERS *Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

A study investigated the role of the Saudi Arabian social studies curriculum in helping Saudi students to understand other cultures. Analysis of the content of social studies textbooks revealed that they cover a wide range of cultural information related to countries from around the world. Saudi students start their cultural education in grade 5 by studying the Gulf Cooperation Council, made up of neighboring states in the Arabian Peninsula. In grades 6, 7, 8, and 9 they study about other selected foreign countries. (Contains a table of countries studied; indexes of cultural indication, population activities, national wealth, geographical information, and maps and pictures; and 10 references.) (BT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 437 329

PROMOTING CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING: THE CASE OF THE SAUDI ARABIAN SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM [1]

BY
FAHAD ALAKLOBI
KING FAISAL UNIVERSITY
SAUDI ARABIA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
FAHAD A. ALAKLOBI
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

SO 031 308

[1] Presented to the 1999 Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Annual Conference, San Francisco, CA March 6-8, 1999.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract:
This research paper investigates the role of Saudi Social Studies curriculum in helping Saudi students understand other cultures. Analysis of the content of social studies textbooks reveals that they cover a wide range of cultural information related to countries from around the world. Indexes 1-5 reveal detailed information regarding cultural aspects being covered in the analyzed textbooks.

INTRODUCTION:

During the last two decades, satellite media, exchange of merchandise, as well as the easing of travel and communication briers among countries around the world, made it possible for people to be effected by daily international events. As a result, a growing intercultural misunderstanding, and understanding, across the globe and within nations, is putting more pressure on schools to help students manage the huge influx of information (Haakenson, 1994). In response, several educational authorities demanded that schools put more emphasis on preparing students for living in a growing multicultural community. The National Council for the Accreditation, for example, stated that schools should prepare students "for the social, political and economic realities individuals will experience in culturally diverse and complex human encounters ... providing a process for individuals to develop competencies for perceiving, evaluating, and behaving in different cultural settings" (1982, p.14). Thus, cultural awareness became one of the important objectives of public education in most countries.

Saudi Arabia is one of the countries caring for helping its' citizens to function in a growing multicultural environment. Although cultural topics are addressed in different parts of the curriculum, the bulk of cultural education is provided through the social studies curriculum. Saudi students attending public schools study social studies -History and Geography- in grades 4-12.

In conjunction with the Saudi government efforts to elevate public education, this study will examine the extent to which Saudi social studies curriculum promotes cultural understanding. Results of this study are expected to aid current efforts exerted by the Saudi Ministry of education to improve the quality of social studies education.

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The current study is designed to examine Saudi Arabian social studies textbooks providing multicultural education. The purpose of the study is to investigate the extent to which the content of these textbooks promotes cultural understanding.

Significance of the study comes from the growing role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the regional politics of the Middle East. The study also coincides with three main events: (1) The Kingdom's calibrations of its' establishment 100 years ago. (2) The Saudi Ministry of Education's current attempts to renew Saudi public education, shifting emphasis from quantity to quality education. (3) The fact that this research paper is presented in the 1999 annual conference of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, focussing on the role of education on building dynamic relations among individuals, societies, and cultures.

LITERATURE:

In response to the growing need for cultural understanding, curriculum manuals from the Institute for Peace and Justice, and similar organizations, adopted new themes, focussing on the interdependency of communities and countries around the world; signaling the need for Multicultural Education "ME" (McGinnis, 1984).

Students in schools adopting programs of ME study differences in social values and cultural heritage among cultures and countries (Brander, 1986; Milner, 1983; Moultry,1988). In other words, ME schools develop grounds on which students encounter similarities and differences between one's own culture and cultures of other nations and countries world wide (Abebe & Wieczorek, 1993). By helping students understand and appreciate other cultures, ME programs provide them with the means needed to develop skills expected to help their functioning positively when encountering divers societies, at home or abroad (Singleton, 1996).

Most aspects of the ME program are incorporated in the social studies education. This was signified in 1994, with the publication of the "Curriculum Standards for Social Studies", by the National Council for the Social Studies. Among the ten thematic standards in social studies, the first, the third, and the ninth emphasize the need for helping learners establish better understanding of diverse cultures. The three themes read as follows:

> *"Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity" (p.21).*
> *"Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, place, and environment" (p. 23).*
> *"Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence" (p.29).*

The three themes affirm the important role social studies should play in providing "the values, Knowledge, concepts, and skills to better understand ourselves, our relationship to earth, and our interdependence with other peoples of the world" (haas, 1989, p.1).

Unlike the United States of America, Saudi Arabia enjoys a homogeneous society, especially with the fact that the country has never been colonized by foreign powers. However, the Saudi Government does not believe on isolation. Thus, cultural education started by the establishment of the first official public high school in the Kingdom, Tahdeer Albaathat High School in 1936 (Alaklobi, 1995). Purpose of this school was to educate Saudi nationals about foreign countries, to which they were going to be sent for college education. Ever since, education about foreign cultures has been part of the Saudi public education curricula.

The Saudi educational plan aims at providing students with cultural information systematically, starting from the inside outwards, according to the Saudi social and political alliance. As stated in table (1), Saudi students start their cultural education by studying about states forming the Golf Cooperation Council "GCC", in grade 5. At the sixth grade, they study about states of the Arab world. At the eighth grade, students are geared toward studying the following Islamic states: A quick review of the GCC states, Philistine, Syria, Egypt, and Morocco from the Arab world; and Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

At the ninth grade, Saudi students study about the following selected states from around the world: India and Japan from Asia, Tanzania from Africa, England from Europe, United States of America from North America, Brazil from South America, and Australia.

Table (1)

Countries Covered by Saudi Social Studies Textbooks

Fifth Grade	Sixth Grade	Eight Grade	Ninth Grade
Kuwait	Iraq	Malaysia	India
Bahrain	Syria	Indonesia	Japan
Qatar	Palestine	Pakistan	Tanzania
UAE	Jordan	Afghanistan	England
Oman	Lebanon	Turkey	USA
Yemen	Egypt	Morocco	Brazil
	Sudan	Palestine	Australia
	Somalia	Syria	
	Libya	Egypt	
	Tunisia		
	Algiers		
	Morocco		
	Mauritania		
	Djibouti		

LIMITATIONS:

Only current Saudi social studies textbooks containing information about foreign countries were considered for analysis. These are the geography texts for grades 4, 6, 8, and 9. Therefor, results of this study cannot be generalized to cover other textbooks.

PROCEDURES:

The current study is the first of its' kind in Saudi Arabia, to the best knowledge of the researcher. Therefore, the researcher had to develop a tool for analyzing the extent to which the contents of social studies textbooks promote cultural understanding. Three professors at the college of education in KING FAISAL UNIVERSITY and three social studies teachers at the Hoffuf school district refereed the tool. Their suggestions and comments were taken into consideration, and several changes took place accordingly. In its final status, the analysis tool consisted of --- items (see appendix A). Each item describes one aspect that its inclusion in the textbook is expected to promote cultural understanding. Three options were stated in front of each item: clearly stated; poorly stated; or not available.

The researcher then used this tool to analyze geography textbooks, focusing on unites that include information related to foreign countries. Results of the analysis are presented below.

RESULTS:

Results of the study are groped in the following categories:

(1) Information regarding the populations' Languages; Religions; Numbers of Population of countries being covered in Saudi Social Studies textbooks. These informations are groped under the title "Cultural Information".

(2) Information regarding the "Populations' Activities" in relation to Agriculture; Industry; Commerce; Mining; and Hunting.

(3) Information related to the "National Wealth" such as Agricultural Wealth; Industrial Wealth; Animal Wealth; Mineral Wealth; and Forest Wealth.

(4) Information related to Information related to the Location; Borders; Area; Geographical Features; Capital City; Other Cities; Climate. These informations are groped under the title "Geographical Information".

(5) Information related to "Maps and Pictures" such as Global Maps; Political Maps; Natural Maps; Plain Maps; Tourism Pictures; and Pictures of Natural Phenomena.

Indexes 1-5 present numerical results of the analysis of the content of Social Studies Textbooks. The results are coded as follows:

1= Information about this topic is not available;
2= Information about this topic is poorly stated; and,
3= Information about this topic is clearly stated.

In relation to the Cultural Information parts of the textbooks' content, Index number (1) indicates that the number of population is clearly stated in relation to every country. However, only the language of Brazilian population is mentioned. Religion of the population of Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, and India is being clearly stated.

As for activities of the population from covered countries. It is clear that mining and hunting activities are only presented at the 8th and 9th grades. Agricultural, industrial, and commerce activities are poorly stated at the 5th and 6th grades, and clearly stated for grades eight and nine. Details are displayed in index number (2).

Index (3) presents data related to the national wealth of countries included in Saudi geography textbooks. The table shows that Saudi students at the 5th and the 6th grades do not study about national wealth of countries in their geography textbooks, with the exception of Yemen at the fifth grade level. Morocco, Japan, and the United States of America enjoys the most clearly stated information regarding their national wealth on the areas of agriculture, industry, animal, mineral, and forest wealth.

Data presented in index number (4) shows that Saudi Geography textbooks do not include information regarding geographical features and climate of Syria, Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon. It also indicates that as for Malaysia and Australia, no cities other than their capital cities were mentioned.

Index number (5) illustrates data related to Saudi Social Studies textbooks enclosure of maps and pictures from countries being covered. It indicates that political maps of all countries being covered are not available. Tourism pictures from Bahrain and Oman as well as pictures of natural phenomena from India and the U.S.A. are included in the textbooks. Natural maps of all countries being covered are clearly presented.

Conclusions:

We conclude from this presentation that:

1. Saudi social studies curriculum covers a wide range of territory, when teaching about foreign cultures. At grade five, Saudi students study about neighboring states in the Arabian Peninsula. At grade six, they move on to study the remaining Arab countries. Tow years later, they learn about selected Islamic states, and at the ninth grade they explore

selected states from all continents. In total, Saudi students are being educated about more 30 states, worldwide.

2. At grade nine, emphasis is given to friendly states. From Asia, India and Japan are selected. From Africa, they learn about Tanzania. England is selected from Europe, the United States of America from North America, Brazil from South America, in addition to Australia.
3. Quantity and quality of information enlarges as students grow up, especially when talking about population activities and national wealth of countries covered.
4. Information regarding geographical location borders, area, geographical features, capital cities, other cities, and climate are clearly stated in all four books.
5. Although covering a wide range of countries, textbooks do not provide information regarding cultural, political, and economic relations between the Kingdom and each individual state.
6. Geography textbooks lack political maps, as well as maps showing the location of each individual country on the glob.
7. Geography textbooks lack information related to antiquities, tourism sites, cultural events, inventions, and arts of countries being covered.
8. Languages and population demography of countries being covered are neglected.
9. Egypt, Syria, and Palestine are covered twice, at the sixth-grade level and at the eight-grade level. Emphasis of these countries reflects the strong ties binding them with the Kingdome of Saudi Arabia.
10. Despite the fact that Iran is one of the most influential states in the region, and enjoys good relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it is not being included among countries taught in Saudi public schools.

Index (1)

Cultural Indication

Grade Levels	Features / Countries	Language	Religion	Number of Population
5th Grade	Kuwait	1	1	3
	Bahrain	1	1	3
	Qatar	1	1	3
	UAE	1	1	3
	Oman	1	1	3
	Yemen	1	1	3
6th Grade	Iraq	1	1	3
	Syria	1	1	3
	Palestine	1	2	3
	Jordan	1	1	3
	Lebanon	1	1	3
	Egypt	1	1	3
	Sudan	1	1	3
	Somalia	1	1	3
	Libya	1	1	3
	Tunisia	1	1	3
	Algiers	1	1	3
	Morocco	1	1	3
	Mauritania	1	1	3
	Djibouti	1	1	3
8th Grade	Malaysia	1	1	3
	Indonesia	1	3	3
	Pakistan	1	3	3
	Afghanistan	1	3	3
	Turkey	1	3	3
	Morocco	1	1	3
	Palestine	1	1	3
	Syria	1	1	3
	Egypt	1	3	3
9th Grade	India	1	3	3
	Japan	1	1	3
	Tanzania	1	1	3
	England	1	1	3
	USA	1	1	3
	Brazil	2	1	3
	Australia	1	1	3

Number 1 = Information about this topic is not available; 2 = poorly stated; and, 3 = clearly stated

Index (2)

Population Activities

Grade Levels	Features / Countries	Agriculture	Industry	Commerce	Mining	Hunting
5th Grade	Kuwait	1	2	2	1	1
	Bahrain	1	1	2	1	1
	Qatar	1	2	2	1	1
	UAE	1	1	2	1	1
	Oman	2	1	2	1	1
	Yemen	2	1	2	1	1
6th Grade	Iraq	2	2	1	1	1
	Syria	1	2	1	1	1
	Palestine	1	2	2	1	1
	Jordan	1	2	2	1	1
	Lebanon	2	2	2	1	1
	Egypt	1	2	1	1	1
	Sudan	2	1	2	1	1
	Somalia	2	1	2	1	1
	Libya	1	1	1	1	1
	Tunisia	2	2	2	1	1
	Algiers	2	2	1	1	1
	Morocco	2	2	2	1	1
	Mauritania	2	1	1	1	1
	Djibouti	2	1	1	1	1
8th Grade	Malaysia	3	1	2	3	1
	Indonesia	3	3	1	2	1
	Pakistan	3	3	1	3	1
	Afghanistan	3	1	3	3	1
	Turkey	3	3	1	1	3
	Morocco	3	3	2	3	3
	Palestine	1	2	1	1	1
	Syria	3	3	3	3	1
	Egypt	3	3	2	3	1
9th Grade	India	3	3	2	2	1
	Japan	3	3	3	3	3
	Tanzania	3	3	3	1	1
	England	3	3	2	3	2
	USA	3	3	1	3	2
	Brazil	3	3	1	3	1
	Australia	3	3	2	3	2

Number 1 = Information about this topic is not available; 2 = poorly stated; and, 3 = clearly stated

Index (3)

National Wealth

Grade Levels	Features / Countries	Agricultural Wealth	Industrial Wealth	Animal Wealth	Mineral Wealth	Forest Wealth
5th Grade	Kuwait	1	1	1	1	1
	Bahrain	1	1	1	1	1
	Qatar	1	1	1	1	1
	UAE	1	1	1	1	1
	Oman	1	1	1	1	1
	Yemen	3	1	2	3	1
6th Grade	Iraq	1	1	1	1	1
	Syria	1	1	1	1	1
	Palestine	1	1	1	1	1
	Jordan	1	1	1	1	1
	Lebanon	1	1	1	1	1
	Egypt	1	1	1	1	1
	Sudan	1	1	1	1	2
	Somalia	1	1	1	1	1
	Libya	1	1	1	1	1
	Tunisia	1	1	1	1	1
	Algiers	1	1	1	1	1
	Morocco	1	1	1	1	1
	Mauritania	1	1	1	1	1
	Djibouti	1	1	1	1	2
8th Grade	Malaysia	3	1	1	2	2
	Indonesia	3	2	1	2	3
	Pakistan	3	3	3	3	2
	Afghanistan	3	1	3	3	3
	Turkey	3	2	3	1	2
	Morocco	3	3	3	3	3
	Palestine	1	1	1	1	1
	Syria	3	3	3	2	2
	Egypt	3	3	1	3	1
9th Grade	India	1	1	1	1	1
	Japan	3	3	3	3	3
	Tanzania	3	3	1	3	3
	England	2	3	2	3	1
	USA	3	3	3	3	3
	Brazil	3	1	2	3	1
	Australia	2	2	3	3	1

Number 1 = Information about this topic is not available; 2 = poorly stated; and, 3 = clearly stated

Index (4)

Geographical Information

Grade Levels	Features / Countries	Geo. Location	Borders	Area	Geo. Features	Capital City	Other Cities	Climate
5th Grade	Kuwait	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Bahrain	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Qatar	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	UAE	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Oman	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Yemen	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
6th Grade	Iraq	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Syria	3	3	3	1	3	3	1
	Palestine	3	3	3	1	2	2	1
	Jordan	3	3	3	1	3	3	1
	Lebanon	3	3	3	1	3	3	1
	Egypt	3	2	3	3	3	3	3
	Sudan	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Somalia	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Libya	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Tunisia	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Algiers	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Morocco	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Mauritania	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Djibouti	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
8th Grade	Malaysia	3	3	3	2	3	1	3
	Indonesia	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Pakistan	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Afghanistan	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Turkey	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Morocco	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Palestine	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Syria	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Egypt	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
9th Grade	India	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Japan	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Tanzania	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	England	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	USA	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Brazil	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Australia	3	3	3	3	3	1	3

Number 1 = Information about this topic is not available; 2 = poorly stated; and, 3 = clearly stated

Index (5)

Maps and Pictures

Grade Levels	Features / Countries	Global Map	Political Map	Natural Map	Plain Map	Tourism Pictures	N. Phenomena Pictures
5th Grade	Kuwait	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Bahrain	1	1	3	1	2	1
	Qatar	1	1	3	1	1	1
	UAE	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Oman	1	1	3	1	2	1
	Yemen	1	1	3	1	1	1
6th Grade	Iraq	1	1	3	3	1	1
	Syria	2	1	3	1	1	1
	Palestine	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Jordan	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Lebanon	1	1	3	3	1	1
	Egypt	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Sudan	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Somalia	1	1	3	2	1	1
	Libya	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Tunisia	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Algiers	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Morocco	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Mauritania	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Djibouti	1	1	3	3	1	1
8th Grade	Malaysia	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Indonesia	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Pakistan	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Afghanistan	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Turkey	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Morocco	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Palestine	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Syria	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Egypt	1	1	3	1	1	1
9th Grade	India	1	1	3	1	1	3
	Japan	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Tanzania	1	1	3	1	1	1
	England	1	1	3	1	1	1
	USA	1	1	3	1	1	3
	Brazil	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Australia	1	1	3	1	1	1

Number 1 = Information about this topic is not available; 2 = poorly stated; and, 3 = clearly stated

REFRENCES

Abebe, Solomon & Wieczorek, Cheryl. (1993) Diversity as a Creative Process: From Classroom Connections to Global Perspectives. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED359155.

Alaklobi, Fahad, (1995). Perspectives on the Saudi Educational System. Journal of the Faculty of Education. No 11, V. 2. Assiut University.

Brandt, G.L. (1986). The realization of anti-racist teaching. London: Falmer Press. (ED 193952).

Haakenson, Paul, (1994). Recent Trends in Global/International Education. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No ED373021.

Hass, Mary E. (1989). Teaching Geography in the Elementary School. ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/ Social Science Education, Bloomington, IN.

McGinnis, J. (1984). Education for peace and justice: Global dimension. St. Louis: Institute for Peace and justice.

Milner, D. (1983) Children and race. London: Sage Publication.

Moultry, M. (1988). Multicultural Education among seniors in the College of Education at Ohio State University. Paper presented at the annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA. (ED 296634).

National Council for the Social Studies. (1989). Curriculum Standards for Social studies. Washington D.C.

Oliver, J.P. (1991), The relationship between the racial attitudes of white college freshmen and sophomore as influenced by exposure to multicultural education practice. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS.

Oliver, Jenny Penney, & Howley, Graig. (1992). Charting New Maps: Multicultural education in Rural Schools. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No ED348196. (p1).

Singleton, Dorothey Lee, (1996). Multicultural Education: The Key to Global Unity. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the World council of Curriculum and Instruction, India.